Pam.
India

Ramabai Sarasvati.

FAMINE EXPERIENCES IN INDIA.

"Blessed are the merciful."

I HAVE long been wishing to thank the kind friends who have so generously sent help at this time of our need, and now I am glad to be able to write a few lines to express my gratitude. "Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble." I pray to our Father to reward you all abundantly for your kindness to us, and thank you with all my heart. An honored friend who has just called on me asked me if I had made my present needs known to my friends in America. "No," I said, in reply to her question, "I have made my needs known to the heavenly Friend who says, 'Be careful for nothing,' and 'Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee,' and I am glad to acknowledge with deep thankfulness His mercy and care for mine and me." He is daily answering my prayers in sending the needful daily bread, and the heathen living around us are finding out that our God is a living and a prayer-answering God!

Several friends have asked me to give an account of my visit to the famine districts, which I do very gladly. I must, however, preface this account with a few of my recollections of the last famine. Many people who lived and worked in it will remember how millions of poor people were starved to death, and how the great part of Madras Presidency and of the Southern Maratha country were laid waste by the famine of 1876. When I heard of the present famine and its havoc in the Central Provinces, my heart sank within me; and I cried to God for help on behalf of those dear country people of mine.

I feel deeply for these poor dying people, because I have myself known what it is to suffer from hunger and thirst, and have seen my dearest relatives die of starvation.

My recollections carry me back to the hard times some twenty-two years ago. The last great famine of Madras Presidency reached its climax in the years 1876–77; but it began at least three years before that time. I was in my teens then, and so thoroughly ignorant of the outside world that I cannot remember observing other people's condition, yet saw enough of distress in our own and a few other families to realize the hard-heartedness of unchanged human nature.

High caste and respectable poor families who are not accustomed to hard labor and pauperism suffered then as they do now more than the poorer classes. My own people among many others fell victims to the terrible famine. We had known better days. My father was a landholder and an honored Pandit, and had acquired wealth by his learning. But by and by, when he became old and infirm and blind in the last days of his earthly life, he lost all the property in one way or another. My brother, sister, and myself had no secular education to enable us to earn our livelihood by better work than manual labor. We had all the sacred learning necessary to lead an honest religious life; but the pride of caste and superior learning and vanity of life prevented our stooping down to acquire some industry whereby we might have saved the precious lives of our parents.

In short we had no common sense, and foolishly spent all the money we had in hand in giving alms to Brahmans to please the gods, who, we thought, would send a shower of gold mohurs upon us and make us rich and happy. We went to several sacred places and temples, to worship different gods and to bathe in sacred rivers and tanks to free ourselves from sin and curse which brought poverty on us. We prostrated ourselves before the stone and metal images of the gods, and prayed to them day and night, the burden of our prayer being that the gods would be pleased to give us wealth, learning, and renown. My dear brother, a stalwart young fellow of twenty-one, spoilt his health and wasted his fine, well-built body by fasting months and months. But nothing came of all this futile effort to please the gods. The stone images remained as hard as ever, and never answered our prayers. Oh that we had found out then that "every man is brutish in his knowledge, every founder is confounded by the graven image; for his molten image is falsehood." "The idols have spoken vanity, and the diviners have seen a lie, and have told false dreams. They comfort in vain."

We knew the Vedanta, and knew, also, that we worshipped not the images, but some gods whom they represented. Still, all our learning and superior knowledge was of no avail. We bowed to the idols, as thousands of learned Brahmans do. We expected them to speak to us in wonderful oracles. We went to the astrologers with money and other presents, to know from them the minds of gods concerning us. In this way we spent our precious time, strength, and wealth in vain. When no money was left in hand, we began to sell the valuable things belonging to us,— jewelries, costly garments, silverware; and even the cooking vessels of brass and copper were sold to the last, and the money spent in giving alms to Brahmans, till nothing but a few silver and copper coins were left in our possession. We bought coarse rice with them, and ate very sparingly;

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but it did not last long. At last the day came when we had finished eating the last grain of rice, and nothing but death by starvation remained for our portion. Oh, the sorrow, the helplessness, and the disgrace of the situation!

We assembled together to consider what we should do next, and, after a long discussion, came to the conclusion that it was better to go into the forest and die there than bear the disgrace of poverty among our own people. And that very night we left the house in which we were staying at Tirpathy,—a sacred town situated on the top of Venkatghiri,—and entered into the great forest, determined to die there. Eleven days and nights, in which we subsisted on water and leaves and a handful of wild dates, were spent in great bodily and mental pain. At last our dear old father could hold out no longer. The tortures of hunger were too much for his poor old weak body. He determined to drown himself in a sacred tank near by, thus to end all his earthly suffering. It was suggested that the rest of us should either drown ourselves or break the family and go their several ways. But drowning ourselves seemed most practicable. To drown one's self in some sacred river or tank is not considered suicide by Hindus, so we felt free to put an end to our lives in that way. Father wanted to drown himself first, so he took leave of all the members of the family, one by one. I was his youngest child, and my turn came last. I shall never forget his last injunctions to me. His blind eyes could not see my face, but he held me tight in his arms; and, stroking my head and cheeks, he told me in a few words, broken with emotion, to remember how he loved me, and how he taught me to do right, and never depart from the way of righteousness. His last loving command to me was to lead an honorable life, if I lived at all, and serve God all my life. He did not know the only true God, but served the, to him, unknown God with all his heart and strength; and he was very desirous that his children should serve him to the last. "Remember, my child," he said, "you are my youngest, my most beloved child. I have given you into the hands of our God. You are his, and to him alone you must belong and serve all your life."

He could speak no more. My father's prayers for me were, no doubt, heard by the Almighty, the all-merciful heavenly Father, whom the old Hindu did not know. The God of all flesh did not find it impossible to bring me, a great sinner and an unworthy child of His, out of heathen darkness into the saving light of His love and salvation. I can now say to the departed spirit of the loving parent, "Yes, dear father, I will serve the only true God to the last." But I could not say so when my father spoke to me for the last time. I listened to him, but was too ignorant, too bewildered, to understand him, or make an intelligent answer. We were,

after this, dismissed from father's presence. He wanted an hour for meditation and preparation before death.

While we were placed in such a bewildering situation, the merciful God, who so often prevents his sinful children from rushing headlong into the deep pit of sin, came to our rescue. He kept us from the dreadful act of being witnesses to the suicide of our own loved father. God put a noble thought into the heart of my brother, who said he could not bear to see the sad sight. We would give up all caste pride, and go to work to support our old parents; and, as father was unable to walk, he said he would carry him down the mountain into the nearest village, and then go to work. He made his intentions known to father, and begged him not to drown himself in the sacred tank. So the question was settled for that time. Our hearts were gladdened, and we prepared to start from the forest. And yet we wished very much that a tiger, a great snake, or some other wild animal would put an end to our lives. We were too weak to move, and too proud to beg or work to earn a livelihood. But the resolution was made, and we dragged ourselves through the jungle as best we could.

It took us nearly two days to come out of the forest into a village at the foot of the mountain. Father suffered intensely throughout this time. Weakness, caused by starvation and the hardships of the life in the wilderness, hastened his death. We reached the village with great difficulty, and took shelter in a temple; but the Brahman priests of the temple would not let us stay there. They had no pity for the weak and helpless. So we were obliged again to move from the temple, and go out of the village into the ruins of an old temple, where no one but the wild animals dwelt in the night. There we stayed for four days. A young Brahman, seeing the helplessness of our situation, gave us some food.

The same day on which we reached that village my father was attacked by fever, from which he did not recover. On the first day, at the beginning of his last illness, he asked for a little sugar and water. We gave him water, but could not give sugar. He could not eat the coarse food; and shortly after he became unconscious, and died in the morning of the third day.

The same kind young Brahman who had given us some food came to our help at that time. He could not do much. He was not sure whether we were Brahmans or not; and, as none of his co-villagers would come to carry the dead, he could not, for fear of being put out of caste, come to help my brother to carry the remains of my father. But he had the kindness to let some men dig a grave at his own expense, and follow the funeral party as far as the river. Father had entered the order of a Sannyasin before his death. So his body was to be buried in the ground

according to the commands of the Shastras. As there was no one else who could help to carry the dead, my brother tied the body in his dhoti, like a bundle, and carried it alone over two miles to its last resting-place. We sadly followed to the river bank, and helped him a little. So we buried our father outside that village, away from all human habitation, and returned with heavy hearts to the ruins of the old temple, where we had taken our abode. That same evening our mother was attacked by fever, and said she would not live much longer. But we had to leave the place. There was no work to be found, and no food to be had. We walked with our sick mother for a while, and then some kind-hearted people gave us a little food and money to pay our fare as far as Raichur. There we stayed for some weeks, being quite unable to move from that town, owing to the illness of our mother. Our life at Raichur was a continuous story of hopelessness and starvation. Brother was too weak to work, and we could not make up our minds to go to beg. Now and then kind people gave us some food. Mother suffered intensely from fever and hunger. We, too, suffered from hunger and weakness; but the sufferings of our mother were more than we could bear to see. Yet we had to keep still through sheer helplessness. Now and then, when delirious, mother would ask for different kinds of food. She could eat but little, yet we were unable to give her the little that she wanted.

Once she suffered so much from hunger that she could bear it no longer, and sent me into a neighbor's house to beg a little piece of coarse bajree cake. I went there very reluctantly. The lady spoke kindly to me, but I could on no account open my mouth to beg that piece of bajree bread. With superhuman effort and a firm resolution to keep my feelings from that lady, I kept the tears back; but they poured out of my nose instead of my eyes, in spite of me, and the expression of my face told its own story. The kind Brahman lady, guessing what was in my mind, asked me if I would like to have some food. So I said, "Yes, I want only a little piece of bajree bread." She gave me what I wanted; and I felt very grateful, but could not say a word to express my gratitude. I ran to my mother in great haste, and gave it to her. But she could not eat, she was too weak. The fever was on her. She became unconscious, and died in a few days after that. Her funeral was as sad as that of my father, with the exception that two Brahmans came to help my brother and me to carry her body to the burning-ground, about three miles from the town.

I need not lengthen this account with our subsequent experiences. My elder sister also died of starvation, after suffering from illness and hunger. During those few months before our sister died, we three travelled on foot from place to place in search of food and work; but we could not get much of either. My brother and myself continued our sad pilgrimage to

the northern boundary of India and back to the east as far as Calcutta. Brother got work here and there, but most of the time we lived a wanderer's life. Very often we had to go without food for days. Even when my brother had work to do, he got so little wages, only four rupees a month, and sometimes much less than that, that we were obliged to live on a handful of grain soaked in water and a little salt. We had no blankets or thick garments to cover ourselves; and, when travelling, we had to walk barefoot, without umbrellas, and to rest in the night, either under the trees on the roadside or under the arches of bridges, or lie down on the ground in the open air. Once on the banks of the Jhelum, a river in the Punjab, we were obliged to rest at night in the open air, and tried to keep off the intense cold by digging two gravelike pits, and putting ourselves into them and covering our bodies — except the heads — with dry sand of the river bank. Sometimes the demands of hunger were so great that we would satisfy our empty stomachs by eating a handful of wild berries, and swallowing the hard stones together with their coarse skins.

Four long years we suffered from scarcity. We did not mind it much, as we were young and strong. We could stand it much better than our poor old parents and weak sister. The heavenly Father very mercifully removed our parents from this earth; and that none of their children, whom they loved so much, died or were separated from them in their lifetime, gave us some satisfaction, but the memory of the last days of their life, full of sorrow, almost breaks my heart. I would never have written this account, had not the necessity of my present situation obliged me to do so. None of my friends can ever understand what my feelings are for the famine-stricken people, unless they know that I have had once to go through the same experience as that of the starving thousands of Central India. Yet I must say that suffering alone is not able to produce sympathy for other sufferers. My own experience of the unconverted state of mind, and the present knowledge of my fellow country women and girls, whom I have ample opportunity to study, shows that suffering in itself has rather a hardening effect on the human heart. It takes away almost all delicate feelings from the soul, making it as hard as a stone. I can quite understand now what God meant when He said to Israel, "I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh." Unless God change our hearts through the wonderful regenerating action of His Holy Spirit, we never have true love and sympathy for our fellowmen. Later on I shall give an example of this. But now I must pass on to the chief subject of this article.

A little over four months ago I heard of the distress of the people in Central India, and at once my heart went out to them in sympathy. The human common sense said: "You had better stop here; and 'Whatsoever

thy hand findeth to do, do it,' here. You have no means and no strength to do what you wish. Your powers are limited, and you will not be held responsible for not doing anything to help those famished people. Indeed, what can a weak woman do to help the dying thousands? Besides, the government of India and other benevolent people are doing what they can to relieve the poor and the needy. There is nothing for you to do." I tried to quiet my conscience in this manner, but louder and louder spoke the voice of God from within my heart: "Remember the days of old"; "Thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondsman in the land of Egypt, and the Lord thy God redeemed thee"; and "Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

I could no longer keep still, and about a month ago started off for the Central Provinces, where two workers had already been sent, who had found out by the time I went that there was a large field of work for those who wished to do something to help the poor sufferers.

A missionary lady, Mrs. Drynan, of Rajputana, accompanied me part of the way, to gather some children for mission orphanages of Poona. We went to Sohagpur first, and began the work at once. We found out from the good people there we could not get the orphan children without the permission of the government. So our first business was to go and see the physician in charge of the hospital, and the Tahsildar in charge of the poorhouse. We went to the hospital too early,— about 8.30 in the morning. The doctor was not there; but right before that hospital were walking three little famished, skeleton-like forms, and this first sight of their distress I shall never forget. The three children, we found out, were of the Chamar caste. Their father had died some time ago, and the mother died only the day before. The eldest was a girl of about seven, the second a boy of five, and the youngest a baby-boy three years of age. The girl was protecting herself from the intense cold with a covering of rags, but the two boys had nothing on their bodies. Their wrinkled faces and the ghastly, death-like expression told the story of the terrible suffering they were in.

All of them were crying for food; and, as we had no food with us, we could give nothing to them. The youngest had sore eyes, and could scarcely open them. The poor babe was suffering from dysentery, so much so that his intestines had been exposed and were almost falling out; and yet he was dragging his miserable body through the streets in search of food. To add to this misery, he fell down and hurt his back, frightened at the sound of a bullock-cart and the loud call of the driver. The blood flowed freely from the injured part, which was already so sore and painful; but there was no one to care for him. He was crying, but tears were not to be seen in his eyes. The children were right before the hospital, but

no one showed any sign of pity. We were under the impression that we might not touch the little orphans before we had permission from the government officials.

The agony and dismay I felt at seeing that sight cannot be told in words. I was perfectly powerless, and could do nothing but cry to the Father to help me. As we could do nothing, we had to harden our hearts, and turn our steps toward the poorhouse, where we expected to find the Tahsildar. The memory of the three little ones, especially of the youngest child, who, I am sure, could not have lived many days after that, haunts me to this day. Whenever I think of them, my heart is filled with indescribable sorrow. I could neither sleep nor rest for the thought of them for many days. We did not get the children, though we tried our best. It took us such a long time to go and see the officer in charge of the poorhouse; and by the time we returned they had gone somewhere, and no one could tell us where they were. I went again to that place, made a thorough search all over the town and round about it, but did not find them. Perhaps they fainted on their way to the town in quest of food, and fell down in some ditch on the roadside, and died there of hunger. The Lord have mercy upon us all, and give us repentance for not going to help such innocent little sufferers.

It will take me too long to describe all that I saw and heard at the poorhouses and relief camps visited. So I will say in general what most affected my mind.

The first poorhouse we saw was no house at all. It was a grove in the outskirts of the town. Groups of famished people were seen sitting all round the grove. Some were lying down in heaps or sitting or lying in ashes on the dirty ground. Some had rags to cover their bodies, and some had none. There were old and young, men and women and children, most of them ill, too weak to move about, and many suffering from leprosy and other unmentionable diseases. Bad men, immoral women, pure young girls, innocent children and old people, good, bad, and indifferent, were freely mixing and conversing with each other. They slept in the open air or under the trees at night, and ate the scanty and coarse food provided by the government. The food was nothing but dry flour and some salt. An accustomed eye could at once see that the grain was adulterated with earth before it was ground into flour. There were several starving orphan children who could not cook for themselves, and had no one to work for them. So they had either to eat the dry flour or depend upon the tender mercies of their fellow-sufferers, the older persons, who took as much of their food as they could, with the right of their might.

The poor people seem to have lost all human feeling. They are most unkind toward each other and the little children around them. They do

not care even for their own children. Some parents eat all the food they get for themselves and for their little ones, and become quite fat, while their children are starved and look like skeletons; and some are even in a dying state, and yet their fathers and mothers feel no affection for them.

Parents can be seen taking their girl-children around the country and selling them for a rupee or a few annas or even for a few seers of grain. The food given to the children is snatched from their hands, and eaten by their stronger neighbors. In some places the government officials give two pice or more to each child or old and sick person unable to work; but what can a baby of two or three years of age do with two copper pieces in its hands? The pice are soon stolen, and the little ones left to die of starvation. In other places food — *i. e.*, wheat or jowari flour, and some kind of pulse — is cooked into *dal* and *roti*, and then distributed to the poor.

The government officials are kind, and are doing what they can to help the poor people at the relief camps and in the poorhouses. But the means at their disposal make it impossible to meet the demands of the needy ones. What are a few thousand rupees among so many thousands, to be supported for months? Perhaps about eight or ten annas, or, at the most, a rupee, per month is allowed for each person; and how much and what kind of grain will that sum bring? Alas, alas! for the poor who are obliged to eat the food given to them at the poorhouses. Few of the subordinate officers, such as the *Mukadams** and cooks, who have it in their power to give or withhold from the poor the food sent for them, have any heart or conscience. The grain — the very cheapest kind — is bought and ground into flour without being cleaned of the sand and earth it contains. Then the heartless cooks steal the flour and put a quantity of earth into it, while they cook the *dal* and *roti;* and nobody notices that the food is thus adulterated. The poor people are too much afraid of the *Mukadams* to complain to the higher officials. The flour and pulse so adulterated, when made into *rotis* and *dal*, do not look any better than cakes of cow-dung.

The people in the poorhouses are in such a degraded condition that even the pigs, who wander round about our villages, do not begin to be compared with them in filthiness. The absolute nakedness of almost all little children, and hundreds of older people covered with dirt, and sometimes with filthy rags,— their skeleton-like bodies full of frightful sores, and their sad, wrinkled faces wearing a ghastly, death-like expression,— and their forlorn condition, are all an indescribably sad sight.

Many of the so-called poorhouses are open grounds, with a sort of fence all round them. Some poorhouses are nothing but sheds temporarily

* Overseers.

erected to shelter the people. The miserable men, women, and children who find shelter in these places are baked in the sun in the day and freeze in cold at night. In some places these poorhouses, or grounds, are divided with a thin fencing, where men and women are placed separately. But this arrangement is not much of a protection to the women. The devil is at work, even in these poorhouses and relief camps; and they are not fit places for young women and girls to be in. The European and native officers employed to look after the interests of the dying thousands are hard at work, and try to do as much as they can. But it is impossible for them to find out what goes on behind their backs. The Sepoys and *Mukadams* are the real masters and rulers of these places. Take, for instance, a poorhouse containing over two thousand poor people and a relief camp where over fifteen thousand people are working. What can one or two, or half a dozen, superior officers do for these thousands? They are obliged to leave the work in the hands of the *Mukadams*, who can do whatever they like. They use their sticks and tongues freely. They pull and push the working coolies, even women. Young men can be seen everywhere talking to girls and women, under the pretence of doing the *Mukadam's* work.

This is no good sign at all. Wicked men and women are everywhere on the lookout for young women and girls. They entice them by offering sweetmeats and other kinds of food, clothing, and fair promises to take them to nice places and make them happy. So hundreds of girls, young widows, and deserted wives are waylaid as they go to the relief camps and poorhouses in search of food and work, and taken away before they place themselves in the custody of the government. The wicked are not afraid of the judgment of God: they are sinning away their lives in the midst of the fearful scenes of famine and pestilence. They are carrying on a wholesale trade in young girls, who have been obliged to leave their families and wander away from home in quest of food. In many cases parents have fallen a prey to the famine, and left their young girls to the tender mercies of their neighbors or fellow-travellers or other wayfarers. Such girls easily fall into the hands of wicked people.

Here is an instance which will convince you of the truth of this story: A young girl of fourteen, and her little sister of about eight years of age, were left orphans, and taken possession of by a wicked man at Itarsi. I happened to see her in the streets, and asked her who she was. She told me her whole story, and said she would let me have her sister, who was not wanted by her cruel master, and that she could not come away for the fear of that man. I wanted to rescue the poor child, but was at that time unable to do so. I prayed to the Lord to show me the way, and in the next week He sent help. A young missionary gentleman came to help me.

He went to the police station, and took her away from the man who had kept her in his possession against her will. She was sent to the mission bungalow with a servant, but her former master carried her away by force. Again the missionary went to the town, and fetched her, and that very night I took her to Jabalpur; and now she and her sister are placed with some good missionary ladies, who will take care of them. The elder girl, poor child, is ruined for life, and is suffering from horrible disease. May the merciful Father help these children!

One of my workers was walking on the road one day, when she saw a little girl of about twelve years old sitting on the roadside. She looked sad and hungry. My worker spoke kindly to her, and found out that she was an orphan. When the worker asked her if she would like to come to me, the girl said she had an older sister, and would go anywhere with her. In the mean while the sister, who had gone to wash, came back to the place where the child was sitting. From her my worker heard their pathetic story: Their father had died about three weeks ago. They had no one to take care of them, and did not know where to go to get food. They were on their way to the relief camp. Some one had told them that there was a lady near the place, who had come to gather some children to give them a home. So they had come to the Sarai to look for her. From this statement we knew they were looking for me; but I had left the Sarai before they came, and so missed seeing them.

My worker then asked the older girl, who is about fourteen, if she and her sister would like to come and stay under my care. The girl said she would, only she did not want to be put into a bad life. She begged of my worker, with tears in her eyes, that she should be allowed to remain pure and be placed under the care of good people; for she had met with many bad people after her father's death, and they had tried to tempt her into a bad life. But she had resolutely refused to go with them. While this conversation was taking place, half a dozen or more wicked men had gathered around my worker, and were about to take the girls away by frightening them out of their wits; but God saved the children from the dreadful fate, and they were safely brought to me.

But, supposing no timely help had reached these girls, what would their condition be to-day? How long could they have resisted the bad men, and how would they have protected themselves in the relief camps? God help the young girls and young women who are obliged to go to relief camps and poorhouses! The sight of the pitiable condition of these poor orphan girls brought to my memory the state which I was in some twenty-two years ago. I bless and thank God for not having allowed us to go to the relief camps in the days of our need. My sister, a fine young woman of twenty-five, and myself, a girl of sixteen, would have easily

fallen into the cruel hands of the wicked people of such places. The very remembrance of the relief camps and poorhouses and the condition of our sisters there makes me shiver; and I tremble with fear for several thousands of young women and girls, who are being sacrificed to the devil in these hard times.

Another young girl of about fifteen was some time ago wandering away from home, when a respectable-looking man told her to go home with him, and help his wife in the household work. She consented, and went with him. He gave her nice clothes and food, and for a few days all went on nicely with her; but the devil was at work in his heart. Other demands were made on her; but the girl said she had gone to his house to work, and not for any other purpose. He then said that she should not get good *sari** and food unless she consented to follow his wishes.

"Very well," she said, and put on her old rags, threw away the good *sari*, and went out on the streets again to beg her food. She was picked up on the same day by a kind lady, and is safe with me now. There are not many such girls who will resist the devil in face of starvation and death.

God be thanked for protecting the virtue of these innocents! But it has been my sad lot to see many little girls ruined for life. Even the little children seemed to have lost all their innocence, and were acting like little devils. What lies, what thefts, what indecent language! "O God," I exclaimed when I saw them, "save us, save our nation from utter destruction!" It seemed as if nothing short of a great flood would be able to wash away all this sin from the face of our country. I wonder at the mercifulness and long-suffering of our Father, who is still bearing with us.

It is impossible for the government officers alone to look after the little children and to protect the virtue of young women and girls. There is a large field of work for you and for me, if only we undertake to do it. Old people and middle-aged persons and delicate women who are unable to break twelve baskets of stone, and carry it to the appointed place, and who cannot get their wages at the relief camps unless they do so much work every day, need our help. The sad sight of aged men and delicate women stretching forth their sore hands and begging you to help them, pouring out their sorrow into your ears, and lamenting over their hard fate, while their tearful eyes look straight into yours to find out if there were a particle of sympathy for them, is altogether too much to bear, for a person having a heart of flesh.

Why do not good Christian people in England and America send money to the missionaries in this country, who are so anxious to help the poor people, and are trying hard to do as much as they can for them, but can-

* A woman's chief garment.

not do more for want of means? The great motherly heart of missionary ladies is yearning for the dying children and other poor of the Central Provinces. Let benevolent people send generous donations to them for feeding and caring for the Lord's little ones. Men can do much; but all godly women must come forward at this time, and care for little children and protect young women whom the government officials are not able to help and care for. It is woman's work, and cannot be left to the officers and their subordinates.

My sympathies are excited by the needs of young girl-widows especially, at this time. To let them go to the relief camps and poorhouses, or allow them to wander in the streets and on the highways, means their eternal destruction.

Ever since I have seen these girls in the famine districts,— some fallen into the hands of wicked people; some ruined for life, and turned out by their cruel masters, owing to bad diseases, to die a miserable death in a hopeless, helpless manner; some being treated in the hospitals, only to be taken back into the pits of sin, there to await a cruel death; some bearing the burdens of sin, utterly lost to the sense of shame and humanity,— hell has become a horrible reality to me; and my heart is bleeding for those daughters of fond parents who have died, leaving them orphans. Who with a mother's heart and a sister's love can rest without doing everything in her power to save at least a few of the girls who can yet be saved from the hands of the evil ones? So, regardless of the trying financial state of my school, I went to work in the Central Provinces to get a few of the helpless young widows.

The Father, who is a very present help in trouble, has enabled me to get some sixty widows, forty-seven of whom will go to school to study, and others will work.* Over 850 rupees were spent in fetching them here. Of this amount about 525 rupees were given me by friends, and I thank them for it. To go to work to get these widows, to fetch them here from Central India, and to feed and clothe them, is an expensive business. Harder still is the work of civilizing them and teaching them the habits of cleanliness. Some are little better than brute animals. The filthy habits they have acquired during this period of famine have become second nature with them. It will take a long time to civilize and teach them. We can do all things in the power of the Lord. The Lord has put it into my mind to save three hundred girls out of the famine districts, and I shall go to work in His name. The funds sent to me by my friends in America are barely enough to feed and educate fifty girls, and several people are asking me how I am going to support all these girls who may come from Central India. Besides their food and clothing, new dormito-

*This number has already been considerably increased.

ries and dining-rooms must be built. Our present school-house is not large enough to hold more than one hundred girls at the most. And how are these emergencies to be met?

I do not know, but the Lord knows what I need. I can say with the Psalmist, "I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinketh upon me;" and He has promised that "ye shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God that hath dealt wondrously with you: and my people shall never be ashamed." My girls and I are quite ready to forego all our comforts, give up luxuries, and live as plainly as we can. We shall be quite contented to have only one meal of common coarse food daily, if necessary; and, so long as we have a little room or a seer of grain left in this house, we shall try to help our sisters who are starving. It seems a sin to live in this good house, and eat plenty of good food, and be warmly clothed, while thousands of our fellow-creatures are dying of hunger and are without shelter. If all of us do our part faithfully, God is faithful to fulfil his promises, and will send us the help we need at this time.

I humbly request you to pray for me and mine, that we may be made strong in the Lord and walk by faith, and not by sight.

Believe me,

Yours in the Lord's service,

RAMABAI.

P.S. — The good missionaries at Hoshangabad, Itarsi, Nursingpur, Jabalpur, and Bina, have been very kind to me, and helped me a great deal in my work. Our dear friend Miss Richardson, of Bombay, went to work with me, and has aided me by giving passage money for the girls whom I brought here. I thank all these good friends for extending their help and for their goodness to me.

RAMABAI.

Shâradâ Sadan, Poona, Jan. 20, 1897.

SECOND FAMINE TOUR.

Dear Guardian,— You were kind enough to ask me to write another letter. So now I thankfully take this opportunity to tell you about a few things which I saw in my second visit to the Central Provinces.

I left Poona on the evening of January 24, with the intention of gathering a few more widows. I felt that it was a clear call from the Lord, and that I should not lose time, but go to work, though I could scarcely see my way. The future looked rather dark. I had no money in hand, nor any friend to help me in finding the girls. In this condition I reached Itarsi; and, through the help of Mr. G. Swan, of the Friends' Mission, I made the acquaintance of the Hindu superintendent of Bager Relief Works. This Mr. Buckhle is a very kind-hearted gentleman, and takes great interest in the poor people. He, like myself, has experienced something of the sufferings of the famine-stricken people, and told me that he had been helped by one of our well-known reformers, educated at his expense, and is now filling a very good position in the government service. He naturally feels sympathy for the poor people working under him, and is conscientiously doing everything in his power to relieve their suffering.

Would to God that there were many good people like him, looking after the interests of the poor famished people in the Central Provinces,— in relief camps and government poorhouses! He helped me to gather sixteen orphan children, whom I sent to the Friends' Mission, to be placed in their orphanages. There seemed nothing further to be done in that place, so I waited there till the next morning to take the first train for another place. But I did not know where to go or what to do: I was alone and downcast; but, as I opened my Bible, the Lord gave me Psalm lv. 22 as my portion for that day and forever. I did cast my burden upon Him, and was sitting quietly waiting for the train to come. It was a fine morning, and nature seemed to smile all over.

A train came at last; and in that came an angel to help me, in the shape of our dear Miss Richardson. I was very, very glad indeed to see her, and asked her if she had any special work in hand. She said she had nothing special to do, but was waiting upon the Lord to guide her. I knew very well what God had sent her there for. I needed somebody to help me, and she was just the person who would take a hearty interest in the work.

I told her what the Lord had told me to do, and said that he had sent her to help me at this special time of difficulty. She kindly consented to co-operate with me for some time; and God so arranged everything for us that we lost no time, but set to work at once.

Miss Richardson made the acquaintance of several deputy commissioners of famine districts, and induced them to accord us special permission to get the widows and orphan children from poorhouses. I was able to get over one hundred widows in this second visit, and Miss Richardson has, I believe, sent over one hundred and fifty children to different mission orphanages, and the Lord also gave me nearly one hundred and fifty orphan children to send to different orphanages. I have one hundred and thirty-nine widows and six non-widow girls in all. Some forty more girls have left or have been sent away for various reasons. All my girls are doing well, and learning to read and write. Later on I shall give you the particulars of what is being done for them. But, first of all, I must tell you something of what the missionaries are doing for the poor people of the Central Provinces.

The Friends' Mission at Itarsi, Hoshangabad, Seoni, and Sohagpur, are doing splendid work. Miss Hooper, of Hoshangabad, has started an industrial home for widows. She is teaching different industries to the women she has gathered around her, but she greatly needs a good helper and money to go on with her special mission. She is an able and sympathetic woman. I do not know another woman in the Central Provinces who is more fitted to work among the widows. I wish to see one hundred or more widows gathered in her home, and taught by her to love and serve God and work for their own country. Christian people who have the means cannot do better than aid such a good work as that of Miss Hooper.

My heart is specially drawn toward another heroic young lady, Miss Franklin, of the Christian Mission at Damoh. Damoh is the worst famine district in the Central Provinces. It is situated in the midst of vast tracts of uncultivated land, and miles of jungle surround it. The people there are dreadfully poor and uncivilized. Miss Franklin has been at Damoh for more than three years, and has witnessed dreadful suffering of the famine-stricken people all that time. No one who has not lived in that part of the country can have any idea how hard and dreary a field of work is Damoh district. But missionary women have gone there in the name of the Lord to live and work in that desert place. I could not but love and admire Miss Franklin and her sister when I saw them laboring day and night for people who are not the least grateful for what is done for them. It is a thankless and weary task, but these two Christian women are engaged in it for the sake of love. Nothing but the constrain-

ing love of Christ could induce any person to go and live at such a place as Damoh.

I wished very much that I had the means and time to help Miss Franklin in her work among orphan children and the poor people in the villages all around Damoh. If Miss Franklin had money and two good Christian helpers, she would be able to help hundreds more of these dying people. She has about one hundred and twenty little boys in her orphanage. Almost all of them came to her in a very poor state, and some in a dying condition; but she and her good sister have become true, loving mothers to these poor orphans. The boys have been so well taken care of that they do not look like famine boys now. They are getting to be quite fat and well-behaved civilized children. The little ones who have been deserted by their parents and relatives, and by them given up as dead, are living in the sunshine of love. It did my heart good to see those dear boys laughing, skipping, dancing, and bounding after their adopted mothers. To-day, after being a few months under the motherly care of Miss Franklin, these boys are tasting the love of God, reading the Word of God, and singing hymns. Miss Franklin has not worked in vain. God has blessed her disinterested efforts for the good of the people of Damoh; and one hundred and twenty children growing up under her care, and hundreds of women whom she visits in the villages around, will rise and bless her. God bless them! I hope He will put it in the hearts of many good Christian people to help these sisters. I wished very much that Miss Franklin had at least 1,000 boys and girls.

I was very much pleased with the industrial training given by the Friends' Mission to their converts and orphan children. I saw one hundred or more men and women working in the weaving establishment at the Friends' Mission at Itarsi. Under the able management of Messrs. Swan and Kilby, the weavers are producing different kinds of excellent cloth of a very good and durable quality. I have bought a quantity of it for my famine girls. It costs a little more than the cloth in the bazaars, but it will be cheaper in the long run. The colors are very good and the patterns tastefully harmonized, and the cloth washes well. Missionaries and other friends who have large orphanages will do well to send their orders for cloth to the Christian Weavers' Company of Itarsi. They will be encouraging the self-support of the Christian weavers. It is more important to encourage such industries for Indian Christian people than simply to teach them to read and write.

One special feature of the Friends' Mission which attracted and pleased me was that the Christian people and orphanage under their care were not Anglicized in any way. European boots and shoes and jackets and Mem-saheb's dresses and European Padree saheb's dresses are unknown to the

Indian Christian people of the Friends' Mission. They are contented with their simple *dal* and *roti*, and never miss tea, coffee, English bread and biscuits. Smoking of tobacco and drinking wine is altogether discouraged. I wish it was so everywhere; but, unfortunately, many of our Western India Christians try to make themselves look like Europeans; and, not being contented with Indian food and dress, they live above their means, and run into debt. The habit of smoking and drinking also overcomes many Indian Christians of Western India. Catechists, preachers, and pastors, following their heavenly calling, are not ashamed of their parched lips made impure by the smoke of tobacco and alcoholic drink. Oh that their lips were touched by one of the seraphims with the live coal taken from the heavenly altar! Then they would preach the pure gospel, and turn the hearts of many wicked people to our heavenly Father.

The C. M. S. Mission at Jabalpur is doing a very noble work for the famine people of that district. Mr. Gill, the former superintendent, started a poorhouse for all people at Jabalpur, and established another poorhouse for children only, at Cutni. At both these places the work was so nicely and systematically carried on that the poorhouses looked like comfortable camps. Poor people and children are well fed and comfortably housed in huts specially built for them. Cutni is one of the worst places near Jabalpur, but the children's orphanage started by Mr. Gill looked like a beautiful oasis in the desert. I saw over one hundred and ninety boys and girls, beautifully clean and nicely dressed and well cared for, at Cutni orphanage. Mr. Gill was working at Jabalpur for six years, and he is well beloved by Christian people. The poorhouse at Jabalpur and the orphanage at Cutni may be called the crown of his missionary work. He has, however, left for England; but the work will not suffer, as it is placed under the care of Mr. Latham, who is as good and kind and able a worker as Mr. Gill.

The Wesleyan and Methodist Missions at Jabalpur are also doing a splendid work for orphan children. They have hundreds of boys and girls under their care. The Wesleyan Mission establishment has started weaving and spinning industries for its children. Some of the boys in that establishment are showing great intelligence and ability, and it is pleasant to see them deeply interested and busily engaged in their work.

Mr. and Mrs. Lundborg, of the Swedish Mission, are also carrying on a deeply interesting work for boys and girls at Saugor. They have large orphanages. The children in them are very well cared for. Mrs. Lundborg is a truly good mother to these children; although she has a large household and is occupied with many duties, yet she gives them personal care.

Mr. Lundborg laid the foundation for a large substantial building some

years ago; but the directors of his mission disapproved of his building an expensive house, for they thought there was no use for it. So the building was given up, and the foundation was left as though it was laid in vain; but the Lord knew what was going to happen. Mr. Lundborg's work of many years is now crowned with success; and the building on the old foundation is going on rapidly, and will soon be occupied by over one hundred boys, who are being brought up and trained under these good missionaries. Not only is the new building going up, but a large workshop, formerly built by government and given up by the city authorities as a profitless work, has been placed at Mr. Lundborg's disposal; and he will make very good use of it. Here many of the orphan boys of Saugor will be trained as smiths and carpenters. May the Lord bless the good missionary in his efforts to raise the condition of the starving people of the Saugor district!

Mr. and Mrs. Denning, of the Methodist Episcopal Mission at Nursingpur, have started an orphanage at their station. I have not had the pleasure of seeing it, but hear hopeful and encouraging accounts of good work being done by them. They have gathered hundreds of children and sent them to different orphanages, and have very kindly helped me to gather widows from poorhouses in Nursingpur district.

I owe a great debt of gratitude to all these missionaries whose names I have mentioned here, and many other good kind people who have helped in the Central Provinces; and I most gratefully thank them for being so kind to my people and myself.

You will be interested to hear of the early days of Mrs. Bruere's work for the famine children. It was at the time of the India National W. C. T. U. Convention at Poona that Mrs. Bruere expressed a wish to me to get some famine children. She had no money in hand. Her wise friends advised her not to venture into this work in the absence of all means. These good friends, to whom she naturally looked for sympathy and support, discouraged her in every way; but she looked to God for support, and made a beginning of the splendid work for famine orphans which she and her husband are now carrying on. Those were the days of great heart agony, and dear Mrs. Bruere seemed almost crushed under the terrible burden. But God honored her faith. He gave her nearly one hundred children and the means to support them. To see her go forward in this God-inspired work, against the dictates of human wisdom, was a great inspiration to me. May the Lord bless her and her husband, and strengthen their hands!

I have heard with joy that Miss Patteson, a veteran zenana missionary, has opened a home for destitute widows. I do not think a worthier and more capable lady worker can be found to do this special work in the

North-western Provinces. She has begun her splendid work at Chunar, near Benares; and I hope Christian people in India and abroad will help her with their prayers and their money.

Notwithstanding all that is done for the famine people, they seem to be wanting more help. I have not changed my opinion in regard to government poorhouses and relief camps. I know that in some places the management of poorhouses is better now than it used to be in the earlier months of the famine. The bodies of persons taking shelter in them are no doubt better cared for, but they are morally and spiritually imperilled. It cannot be otherwise while inferior, irreligious, and brutish young men continue to be employed as *Mukadams*, cooks, store-keepers, watchers, and managers in the poorhouses and relief camps.

In one of the poorhouses, when looking for young girls and widows, I inquired of a girl about fourteen if she would like to accompany me. She said she would, but that she was "kept," there by some one. I did not understand her at first. So I asked her three times over, to know if she was detained there against her wish; but I understood the dreadful meaning of that word "kept," when an old woman sitting beside her explained it to me. This was in a government poorhouse, where the government officers are supposed to protect the virtue of young women detained under some pretence or other. I told the deputy commissioner of that district about it. He was staying in the same town. He nodded his head, and said that it is quite possible that such things are happening in the poorhouses, but he cannot help it.

The poor workers in the relief camps are not only underpaid, but out of their little pay they have to spend a certain sum to please the *Mukadams*, who in their turn have to bribe their superiors in order to get employment. Young women have either to starve or sell their virtue. There is no other alternative for them.

While travelling in Central India, I came to know that the average Anglo-Indian's attitude toward missionaries and their work is not only that of indifference, but of opposition. In Bundelkhund and other native territories the Rajas, I hear, are not so much opposed to missionaries going to live among their people as are English soldiers and other white men in authority.

Some of the ladies of the American Friends' Mission tried to live in the Guna Cantonment, so that they might be able to extend their work round about the place. But the British soldiers living there opposed their plan, and refused to allow the missionary ladies to stay in their neighborhood.

An English lady, the wife of a military officer, and the only lady living there, asked why these missionary ladies should not be allowed to remain at Guna,— they were but women, and could not do any harm to the

soldiers. But the English soldiers knew better than she the power and influence of godly women. They said the women are the worst creatures; for did not Dr. Kate Bushnell and Mrs. Andrews — those two dreadful women — expose the doings of the high military officers? And can they ever forgive the sect and sex to which those two women belong? So their resolution about not allowing those missionary ladies to stay at Guna was unanimously passed and carried out.

The reasons for not allowing the missionaries to gain a footing in native territories are that many of the British soldiers and officers are given to dreadful vices; and, as they can have their own way in native territories much better than in British India, they do not want anybody who may be a check to their waywardness to live near them.

Guna and many other places are thickly peopled with simple, submissive, ignorant people. The soldiers get hold of any pretty girls they may take a fancy to, and "keep" them. The parents of the girls, many of them high caste and respectable, bewail their fate, but are powerless in the presence of the British soldiers. These devils in human shape keep the girls so long as they want, and turn them away when they get tired of them, and get new ones to satisfy their lust. Wicked men and women, who trade in young girls, know well where to find their customers; and government relief camps and poorhouses help their trade.

Detaining the young girls in poorhouses and relief camps, and not allowing the real friends and well-wishers of these poor creatures to rescue them, means helping sinners in their awful trade. For the wicked gain time, make acquaintance with the girls, tempt them with fair promises, and get them to run away where they are beyond the reach of their friends and relatives. I suppose the advocates of legalized vice do not mind this, and will not take notice of it. But Christians in India and England must wake up at this time, and try their best not to allow the dreadful demon, the C. D. act, to come into existence again. The birthright of Indian women had been trampled down long enough. If the C. D. act comes into existence again, British iniquity will reach its climax, and God's vengeance is sure to come down on the ruling nation. The wicked must not think that the poor, ignorant women of this country have no defender; for "their Redeemer is strong, the Lord of hosts is His name: He shall thoroughly plead their cause."

Several friends have advised me not to try to get any more girls from the famine districts, but I leave it to God to decide. If He will that I should get more girls, He will send them to me. If not, I shall be contented to stop where I am. I do not want to come in the way of some one else; nor have I any ambition in regard to filling my school with a large number of girls, but simply want to help as many as will come to my home

according to God's will. I am hoping that I may be able to save a few more girls from the famine districts.

Some domestic difficulties necessitated my return earlier than I expected. Great trials and distress awaited me here, but I was mercifully kept ignorant of these while I was in Central India. One of these many trials was that some strange, unknown cause had prevented our American friends from sending the usual allowance. For more than six weeks we were daily kept in fear of starvation. But the Father of the fatherless and the God of the widow knew our needs, and He somehow put it in the hearts of His children to send me money for the support of my girls. The accounts given below will show that many good people have kindly and generously helped me in this undertaking.

Want of means to support the girls was not the only difficulty I had to face on my return home from the Central Provinces. Some of my special friends were angry and displeased with me for having gone to get girls from the famine districts. To add to this, the plague had come on us. The suburban municipality of Poona came down upon me like a thunderstorm. Order after order was sent by the city authorities to do this, that, and the other thing within twenty-four hours.

I was to remove over one hundred girls within two days. I had neither the place nor the means to take them away. When I said this to the city magistrate (Mr. Plunkett), he said that, as I had brought the girls from the famine districts, I might send them away if I liked; but he did not think it necessary to take any further notice of our distress and difficulty. To have brought the girls here to save them from starvation and death was my great sin. He told me to take the girls to the segregation camp if I had no other place to send them. He would not allow me to keep any famine girls in Poona even if I hired large houses at great expense.

I was not to be allowed to enlarge my old school buildings at Poona. Our compound, containing nearly three acres of ground, was to be occupied by only thirty people. The reign of terror had begun in Poona. Unsympathetic Moghuls, and not Christians and civilized men, seemed to have begun reigning over this city. An old, experienced man should have known better than to order me to take over one hundred girls to an open ground, and expose them to public gaze. Our Poona men, of all men in India, are famous for their disregard of women's feelings; and our dear old magistrate has sadly come under their influence. He is but a weak human being, after all; and I do not wonder at his contracting uncivilized habits of treating women in such a way as he treated us. He thinks that women are a bad lot and very difficult to manage, but I cannot help being glad to think that he had a woman to nurse him and rock his cradle when he was a helpless little baby. Our city magistrate ought to be very thankful to God that he created women to care for man and make him happy.

Mr. Plunkett ordered me to remove my girls from this place within forty-eight hours. I knew I could not keep them all in the house, and had put up sheds for them in the compound; but the sheds were of no use now. I could not send the girls to the segregation camp; and I therefore made up my mind to send them to Telegaum, about twenty miles away. They had no proper shelter there. The water was bad, and sun very hot. One of our old girls, a nice, healthy child, the only child of her old father, died of sunstroke within a week after their removal to Telegaum; and several other girls became very ill. Two other girls died later on. They were too weak to stand the hardships of outdoor life.

The removal of the girls from place to place, and consequent increase of sickness among them, added largely to my expenses and anxiety; but I was upheld by the merciful Father in all these trials. We could not stay long at Telegaum, so I had to make some arrangement for the girls. There is a farm at Kedgaum belonging to our school. It is about forty miles from here. We have a large piece of ground, but there are no shade-trees anywhere near the place; and to live there in this hot season is not safe. But there was no other place where I could take my girls. So several large sheds were erected on a suitable piece of ground, which was fenced with babul thorns. A little over five weeks ago I took all my girls to dwell at Kedgaum. The heat is intense there. Notwithstanding all our efforts to keep the girls well, they are getting sick. They are too delicate to stand the heat. They get fever and sore eyes. Our old girls and some of the helpers who are staying at Kedgaum are suffering from the effects of the unbearable heat.

My eyes have been nearly blinded, and I cannot do much writing; and my business has to be neglected against my wish. A house must be built to shelter the girls. Our Poona municipality is determined not to allow me to enlarge our school-house. So I am thinking of requesting the collector to allow me to build a house on our ground at Kedgaum. A large cattle-shed is under construction there, and we shall be obliged to live in it with our cows and bullocks when the rains come down. But we cannot always live in the company of our brute friends. I am planning to build several little houses for our new girls, so that they may live in separate little families. Some of my old girls who have been trained for the work in this school will take charge of these houses.

The houses to be built at Kedgaum will cost over 40,000 rupees. The new structure in our Poona compound for some of the new girls (commenced before the trouble with the magistrate) will cost 7,000 rupees. I have paid 4,000 of this amount, and have money in hand to pay the remaining part, I am sure that the Lord, who knows our needs, will send me the money to build the new houses on the farm.

The bright and intelligent girls can be taught in this school; and others can stay in the farm, learn to read and write a little, and acquire some industry which will help them in after life. They will also help in gardening and dairy work in the farm. Had it not been for the heat and a few other disadvantages, I would not be sorry to have my school at Kedgaum. The new school seems to be taking shape, and the work is becoming well organized. The wild famine girls are divided into little classes, and given in charge of their trained sisters. They are learning regular habits of life and getting to be quite nice and civilized. Each girl has some work to do, and learns in school certain hours of the day. My old girls have nobly come forward to assist me in this work. It has been quite an inspiration to some of them, and they are glad to practise what they learned in books and talks all these years.

It is quite pleasing to see some of the old girls vying with each other in doing deeds of kindness and helping their new sisters. The youngest girl in charge of one of the classes is about fourteen years of age. She was left to die, when a baby, by her own father, and was kindly taken care of by a good man and his wife. The man died a few years ago. His wife and the adopted child came to our school. The widow, after being five years in my school, became a Christian of her own accord; and her adopted child followed her example.

This child has adopted a little famine girl about three years of age, and is truly a mother to the helpless, unattractive baby. The little mother has twenty-three small children in her charge, and this class is really the best managed in the whole new school. I have brought six little girl-children along with the young widows. All these have been adopted by six of the old girls, and are very well taken care of. All of these new little ones were in a sad condition, and would have died, had they not been so well cared for.

A baby of about two years was found by a policeman on the roadside in Damoh district. The deputy commissioner sent her to the missionaries there, and I took her from them. No one knows whose child she is, nor what her name is. The child seemed to have lost all sense. She would neither cry nor laugh nor smile, and would sit for hours like a stone statue, her sad little head turned on one side. She would not talk, or ask for food if no one gave her anything to eat; nor would she cry for hunger and pain, if beaten by unkind famine girls. This was most sad to see; and I could not bear to leave the little one, and come away from Damoh.

As I was bringing some girls from Damoh, I found two little girls wandering away in the jungle in the dark night. We were travelling in bullock-carts, and stopped for an hour or so to rest, in the midnight, on the roadside in the jungle.

A wolf was prowling around that place in search of food, and came very near one of our carts as we were getting ready to go away. Just at this time two little girls about eight or nine years of age came near us. We found out from them that they had no one to take care of them. Their parents had died; and the two little girls — one of them a Brahmin, and the other a Chamar girl — were wandering in search of food. They had no place to rest, nor a friend who would care for them. I asked them if they would come with me, and they gladly consented. It was a great joy to feed these hungry little ones and to rescue them from death, as it were; for the hungry wolf would have killed them that night, had not the merciful heavenly Father guided our footsteps to that place. I left the Chamar girl with the missionaries at Jabalpur, and brought the little Brahmin widow with me.

Two days and nights of hard travelling in the bullock-carts brought us to the banks of the river Herna, about twenty-three miles west of Jabalpur. It was a fine morning, and nice scenery around; and the clear stream of water flowing at the foot of the mountain was a great inducement for us to stop and rest a little on the lovely banks of the Herna. We all got down from the bullock-carts, washed and refreshed ourselves with a cold meal and a drink of the clear, cool water of the river. By and by one of the famine girls — not satisfied with what she had to eat — made her way into the field, and picked some green gram from it. Others were about to follow her example, when, my attention having been drawn by their suspicious movements, the mischief-maker was brought back to the resting-place, and the corn taken from her, and quietly returned to the owner of the field. After this the little girl and her followers had a lecture on honesty, and were left to reflect upon what they had seen and heard. Soon after it became evident that the lecture had not done much good to the ring-leader of this band of little thieves; for she had left the party, and disappeared.

I thought I would let her go her own way, and not try to get her back, so did not say anything about it. But one of the drivers of our bullock-carts went after her a long way, and brought her back. I thought I would like to teach a lesson to her and to others by making an example of her, and told her that she need not have run away in that manner, that I was perfectly willing she should go if she did not care to remain with us, and I was not willing to take her back in our family, as she had not shown herself worthy of such a privilege. She pretended to cry and repent, but I could see from her face that it was not true. Not wishing to encourage such bad conduct before the other girls, I told her that she might go away, and I would not take her with me.

The evening came. At about five o'clock all our carts were loaded and

made ready for the night's journey. The long procession of seven bullock-carts started slowly. My cart was in the rear, so I could look on the scenery behind. The little offender spoke a few words, and said she had made a mistake in going away, but now wanted to go with us. I thought she did not speak all this from her heart, and still refused to take her. She said she would follow us on foot if I did not take her in the cart. I wanted to see if what she said was true, and ordered the carts to start without allowing her to get in any one. The poor girl stood there for some moments; and then, her thin legs seeming not able to carry the weight of the body, she sat down on the ground and looked on the starting procession of carts in silence. I still held on, ordering my driver to go slowly, hoping all the time that the girl would get up and follow us. But she did not. Her repentance did not seem genuine. A few of the passers-by gathered around her after we left her. They spoke to her, but she did not get up; and they went their way. They did not care for her.

I had seemed very cold and indifferent; and perhaps the poor girl thought that I did not love her, and did not care to come to such a loveless person. So she sat there quite still, and my cart went on. It was getting dark, the sky was clouded and looked as though it was going to rain. The dark mountain range and the river bank, now deserted by people, formed the background of that living picture of misery and helplessness. The world seemed very, very wide; and on it was thrown one little girl, friendless, homeless, and helpless. The picture is everlastingly engraved on my heart. I shall never forget the lonely figure sitting there on the elevated ground under the dark sky. The sad picture was too much, too much for me. I ordered the driver to stop the cart, for I could not move an inch from that place.

My heart burnt within me, and I thought of the sublime love of the dear heavenly Father for me. How often I have rebelled against Him and gone my own way, and how many countless times He has called me back and taken me to Himself! "I have spread out My hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts." This is as true of me as of Israel. And yet how often has the loving Father caused me to hear His voice, saying, "How long wilt thou go about, O thou backsliding daughter?" "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." "Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord, and I will not cause Mine anger to fall upon you; for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever." The Lord taught me a precious object-lesson of His love in that desert place; and His Holy Spirit took Rom. v. 8 for a text, and showed me that, just as I was the object of His love, so ought the poor wandering girl to be an object of my love.

I sat still in the cart for a few moments to take in the whole picture of the thing before me, and then motioned that girl to come to me. She was too far to hear my voice; but she saw the motion of the hand calling her, and at once bounded and ran toward me, looking as though a new life had been put into her dead soul. I felt very happy to see her face brightened with hope, and it was such a relief to me to take her back in my family. This girl, Girija, a child of the mountain,— for this is the meaning of her name,— is a well-behaved child, and is now getting to be civilized, and learns her lessons well.

In conclusion, I must thank all the good and kind friends who have so generously given toward the support of my poor famine girls. I am very grateful to them and to you for all the kindness you have shown to me. The Lord will bless you, and reward you as you deserve.

You will see from the accounts that I have not much money left in hand, but I shall look to God. He says, "I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it."

Yours in the Lord's service,

RAMABAI.

POONA, May 6, 1897.